

Jack Anderson's Washington Merry-go-round—

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WASHINGTON — Ronald Reagan defended ex-President Richard Nixon's Watergate record until the last incriminating tape was made public. Now Reagan has signed on a key member of the Watergate team, Kenneth Rietz.

Throughout the Watergate uproar, Reagan went out of his way to defend the Nixon "spies" because, he contended, they were not "criminals at heart." Now he has assigned a major role in his campaign to one of Nixon's chief spies.

For during the 1972 campaign, Rietz ran a junior Watergate operation. He formed a network of young spies and dirty tricksters who came to be called the "Kiddie Corps."

One of his undercover operatives, a George Washington University student, was paid \$150 a week to infiltrate a peace vigil at the White House and set up the demonstrators for arrest on drug charges.

Rietz also directed the colorful John "Fat Jack" Buckley, who planted a spy in the headquarters of Sen. Ed Muskie, D-Me. For \$1,000 a month, the spy slipped folders full of intra-office memos to Buckley, who photographed them with a 35-millimeter camera and delivered the film strips to Rietz.

Like a couple of characters in a spy thriller, Rietz and Fat Jack would meet on street corners near the White House to transfer the clandestine negatives. This was how President Nixon kept tabs on the man who was then considered his most likely Democratic rival.

Nixon's right bower, H.R. Haldeman, was so pleased with the results that he began grooming the 32-year-old Rietz to be the next Republican National Chairman. Rietz actually was preparing to take charge of the 1974 Republican congressional campaign when his Watergate activities hit the headlines.

He resigned under fire.

Now Reagan has brought him back into politics. At age 34, Rietz is a shrewd political operator, who handles special events for the Reagan campaign and is also Reagan's chief organizer in California. In fact, Rietz is a shrewd temporary Reagan headquarters in the state.

Rietz told us he has received "no heat" because of his Watergate connection. But the unscented odor of Watergate lingers.

Footnote: Reagan's press adviser, the able, affable Lyn Nofziger, also has a slight Watergate aroma. In 1972, he slipped \$10,000 of Nixon's ill-gotten campaign cash to a political promoter who used the money to hire members of the American Nazi Party to woo George Wallace supporters into the Nixon camp.

TAPPED TELEPHONES: The secret files of federal snoops are weighted down with telephone logs of tapped conversations.

For the enlightenment of the taxpayers who have shelled out millions for all this wiretapping, we have obtained a typical telephone log from the locked files. This should give the taxpayers a pretty good idea of the trivia they're paying for.

We won't identify the wiretap victim, out of respect for his privacy, except to say that he was suspected some time ago of leaking Pentagon information to Washington's eminent private eye, Richard Baste.

The log opens with this dramatic revelation: "Subject's wife calls Goodwill agency." Not long afterward, the wife is back again on the telephone to speak "with a Mr. Groves about renewing their lease."

The high point of the day for the Army eavesdropper came when "Subject calls

wife. Talk about going out to movies and money matters." This was followed, according to the carefully classified log, by a call from the wife "for baby sitter to next door neighbor."

Next morning, a friend "wants a ride to work" but "subject's wife ... tells him subject will be a little late. He overslept." After the subject departed belatedly for his Pentagon office, the wife called a friend named Joan to "talk about kids, Joan's upcoming trip to Munich."

Mindlessly recording every conversation, the wiretap informed the Army that "Unknown woman calls for subject's wife. Child answers phone. Mother not in. Woman will call back." In the meantime, the log reports: "Weather forecast dialed."

The most sinister information that was collected from a week of monitored telephone calls was that the household received a "call from ... magazine saleswoman" and that the householder's friend finally talked him into providing a ride to work.

INTELLIGENCE DIGEST: The Soviet-supported guerrillas in Angola,

With Les Whitten

according to secret intelligence reports, are throwing back the American-supported guerrillas on most fronts. Only along the Benguela railroad line, which cuts across the center of the country, have the pro-America forces been holding their own.

—U.S. Analysts simply cannot figure how much the Soviets are spending, in dollar equivalents, for military programs. The Soviet budget is too unfathomable, with its hidden expenditures and incomparable costs. The U.S. experts concentrate, therefore, on comparing capabilities rather than costs.

—Chile's hot-headed Ambassador to Washington, Manuel Trucco, has been castigating Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., in private. The Senator has been a thorn in the side of the Chilean dictatorship. In retaliation, Trucco has called Kennedy "young and arrogant" and "a professional demagogue." On at least one occasion, Trucco alluded to the Senator's Chappaquiddick accident, with the remark that Kennedy had allowed the "banner of human rights ... to sink below murky waters."